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infiltration
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STATEMENT OF SECRETARY OF DEFENSE ROBERT S. McNAMARA

The clandestine infiltration of personnel and materiel from North Vietnam into South Vietnam continues to play a vital role in providing the Viet Cong with the leadership, technical competence, weapons, and munitions required to carry on the insurgency against the Government of Vietnam.

Recent evidence, from newly captured prisoners and documents, has increased the estimate of infiltrators since 1959 to a total of 39,000. Reports so far confirm the infiltration of between 5,000 and 8,000 personnel in 1964 alone, and, in view of the normal time lag between actual infiltration and confirmation, it is probable that there were at least 10,000 infiltrators in that single year.

Furthermore, recent captures indicate that approximately 75% of those infiltrated during 1964 were born in North Vietnam. It is clear that the Communists are determined to keep up this support despite the drying up of the supply of former Southerners who were ordered North by the Viet Minh in 1954. Many of the recent captives are young draftees called into infiltration units that marched south through Laos in units 500-600 strong.

With the changing nature ~~[and the increasing scale]~~ of infiltration both of arms and of personnel, the course of aggression pursued by the government of North Vietnam has grown progressively more flagrant and unconstrained. The latest step is the covert infiltration of a regular combat unit of the North Vietnamese Army into South Vietnam. Evidence accumulating in the last month has now confirmed the presence in northwest Kontum Province since February of the 2d Battalion of the 101st Regiment, 325th Division of the People's Army of Vietnam.

Meanwhile, the great bulk of the weapons requirements of the Viet Cong are supplied from external sources. Since 1961, the Viet Cong have captured approximately 39,000 weapons from government troops while losing 25,000 of their own -- a net gain of only 14,000. Thus the Viet Cong have gained only 10-15% of their over-all weapons requirements, by capture. The remainder of the weapons, for their 38-46,000 main force troops and for their 100,000 irregulars have come from external sources.

or 30% of the requirements for their main force units alone.

Moreover, it appears that the Viet Cong main force units now are being entirely reequipped and retrained with the newest Chinese Communist family of weapons. For example, 101 weapons were captured from elements of a Viet Cong regiment in Chuong Thien Province on April 5 and 6. They are believed to be representative of the weapons mix of VC main force units. They consisted of 1 US M1 rifle and 4 US carbines, an East German light machine gun, 2 Czech assault rifles and the rest Chinese Communist weapons, including 72 modern rifles and carbines, 11 assault rifles, 4 light machine guns, 2 60mm mortars, 3 rocket launchers and a 75mm recoilless rifle. Thus over 90% of the small arms and 100% of the larger pieces were of Bloc -- mainly Chinese -- origin. Prisoners captured in this battle stated that their units had been quiet in the past two months because they had withdrawn to the U Minh Forest to receive and to train with the new family of Chinese Communist weapons. The ammunition ~~xxxxxxx~~ supply for these weapons has been and will have to be infiltrated from North Vietnam.

The current South Vietnamese and US air strikes against the North have been carefully designed to impede infiltration of the men and materiel which make the

difference between a situation which is manageable and one which is not manageable internally by the Government of South Vietnam. The air strikes have been carefully limited to military targets -- primarily to infiltration targets: transit-point barracks, supply dumps, ammunition depots, lines of communication, radars in the vicinity of these facilities, and more recently railroads, highways and bridges serving the infiltration routes.

The strikes against bridges have been particularly successful. During the period April 3-23, Vietnamese and US aircraft struck a total of 24 rail and highway bridges along key lines of communication in North Vietnam. Primary emphasis has been placed on those routes south of 20° North which have been associated with the movement of men and material southward into Laos, and from there, ultimately into South Vietnam. Twenty-three of the bridges have been destroyed or so badly damaged as to be rendered incapable of supporting traffic.

The basic objective of these bridge strikes has been to inhibit, reduce and deflect the movement southward of men and materiel by effectively denying use of primary lines of communication and by forcing dependence on an inadequate secondary road system and alternate means of transport. Secondly, such strikes have been designed to increase dependence on an already overburdened truck transport capability by denying use of rail lines in the South. That is, the objectives are to force the infiltration from railroads to trucks and from trucks to feet.

A total of ~~ten~~^{nine} highway bridges have been struck and destroyed along the key North-South coastal highway Route 1. In addition, two railway and two combination railway-highway bridges situated along Route 1 between Thanh Hoa and Vinh also have been destroyed. These latter strikes have effectively terminated the movement of rail traffic from Thanh Hoa southward to the various convoy-support and staging areas near Routes 8 and 12. Destruction of the railway bridges will result in increased ~~dependence~~ dependence on the highway systems; destruction of the highway bridges will complicate the movement of vehicle convoys southward.

Ten bridges have been struck along the routes ~~xxxx~~ leading westward into Laos. Heaviest emphasis has been placed on bridges situated along Routes 8 and 12 which are directly associated with the movement of men and materiel into the Panhandle area of Laos and, ultimately, southward into South Vietnam.

U.S. strikes against bridges in North Vietnam have been extremely accurate and very effective. Spans and piers have been dropped and destroyed, and bridge approaches and abutments have been severely damaged. Supplementing the bridge strikes, armed reconnaissance is being conducted against truck convoys, maritime traffic, and rolling stock along rail lines. In addition, strikes are being accomplished against secondary target areas associated with the lines of communication.

The carefully controlled air strikes will continue as necessary to impede the infiltration and to persuade the North Vietnamese leadership that their aggression against the South must stop.